

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER
State Allocation Board Meeting, August 23, 2006

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CLASSROOM LOADING AND FUNDING

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present an update on the status of classroom loading standards and funding for continuation high, community day, county community and county community day school projects.

DESCRIPTION

Assembly Bill (AB) 695, Chapter 858, Statutes of 1999, required the Department of General Services (DGS) to complete a study on the loading standards and method of funding for continuation high, community day, county community and county community day school projects. On behalf of the DGS, the Office of Public School Construction (OPSC) in conjunction with the California Department of Education, the Department of Finance, and the Legislative Analyst's Office completed the study and presented it to the State Allocation Board (SAB) and to all school districts in March 2003. The report concluded that the SAB should consider changing the classroom loading standard for Alternative Education classrooms from 25 pupils per classroom (K-6) and 27 pupils per classroom (7-12) to 18 pupils per classroom for all grade levels and the SAB should consider developing a new school allowance for these projects. In August 2003, Staff presented recommendations to the SAB based on the conclusions in the report; however, the Board requested that the item be held over to a future meeting.

In March 2004, Staff presented regulatory amendments to increase the Excessive Cost Hardship Grant for Alternative Education projects; however, a recommendation to amend the classroom loading standard was not presented. Prior to approving Staff's recommendations, the SAB made a request that Staff continue discussions on the classroom loading standard with the Implementation Committee, if not otherwise resolved. In addition to approving the regulatory amendments, the SAB also directed Staff to review the Alternative Education funding activity after approximately one year and present a report on the adequacy of this funding method. In February 2006, Staff presented such a report and indicated that there was insufficient data to conclusively determine if the funding method was adequate, and the Board requested that Staff bring back a report when the close-out audits are complete. The SAB also made a request that Staff bring back a report on the status of the loading standards for Alternative Education schools.

STAFF COMMENTS

The OPSC recognizes that this issue has been in discussion for quite some time and the need to resolve this issue is very important. However, there are a couple of factors that preclude the OPSC from presenting a conclusive recommendation to the Implementation Committee and the SAB at this time. The first of which includes the lack of sufficient data available to proceed with a conclusive recommendation. Any discussion to change the loading standard will trigger a discussion on the appropriate Alternative Education grant that should be provided in the event the loading standard is amended. Prior to having this discussion, it is important that Staff have an opportunity to analyze the information resulting from the close-out audits.

The second factor involves the immediate need to dedicate staff resources on the implementation of AB 127, Chapter 35, Statutes of 2006. AB 127 has an urgency clause that requires regulations be ready for implementation in the event the voters of California approve the bond act in November. Therefore, staff resources have been directed to prepare discussion items and proposed regulations for several upcoming Implementation Committee meetings in anticipation of the November ballot.

Staff proposes to bring the classroom loading standard and funding issue before the Implementation Committee once staff resources are once again available and there is sufficient funding data to review.

RECOMMENDATION

Accept this report.